Colorado Plateau NPs Hold First Biennial Science Conference

The First Biennial Conference on Research in Colorado Plateau NPs, held July 22-24 on the Flagstaff campus of Northern Arizona University, comprised 39 presentations. They covered the entire range of plateau park research, from grazing impacts through birds and fish, mammals, geology, archeology, sociology, hydrology, air quality, vegetation, and Geographic Information Systems.

John Davis, who will soon be leaving the superintendency of Grand Canyon NP for Washington, D.C.,to become NPS A/D for Operations, welcomed the conferees, as did Patricia Reed, NAU vice-president of academic affairs.

NPS A/D for Natural Resources Eugene Hester flew in from Washington to congratulate the gathering on the biogeographic approach that has been taken by Colorado plateau parks research. (See editorial). Bruce Kilgore, Western Regional Chief Scientist, described the history of the recently established NAU Cooperative Park Studies Unit (CPSU) and the role of its leader, Charles van Riper III, in conceptualizing and establishing the science program. The Unit's holistic approach to research and problem-solving in a biogeographic region of related problems and resources has been responsible, Kilgore said, for support from two, and possibly three NPS Regions – something that has never happened before in NPS history.

(The Unit is based in the Western Region, enjoys Rocky Mountain Region support, and may soon receive additional support from the Southwest Region.)

Dan Huff, Rocky Mountain Regional Chief Scientist, spoke of the need for a synergy of management and its concomitant need – a synergy of science. The double-barreled NPS mission, to maintain ecological preserves and to serve as a recreation agency, demands the best in natural and social science research, Huff said, "and if you don't *like* this problem," he added:, "I can only quote Barbee [Yellowstone NP Supt. Robert Barbee]: 'The U.S. Postal Service needs a few good people.'"

Following the plenary session, at which John Cherry, Assoc. Director of the Western Region; Homer Rouse, Assoc. Director of the Rocky Mountain Region, Henry Hooper, Assoc. V-P of Academic Affairs at NAU, and van Riper, all spoke, the three-day session went into high gear. Many of the studies presented will appear in future issues of *Park Science*.

A lively symposium on air quality brought all the conferees together for two hours on the second morning. Roger Clark, director of research for the Grand Canyon Trust, chaired a panel of five: John C. Freemuth of Boise State University; C.V. Mathai, principal scientist for Arizona Public Service; Linda Mazzu, Grand Canyon NP Resource Management Specialist; Debra Mangis of the NPS Air Quality Division, Denver; and Ken Luckow, Air Quality Specialist for the USFS, Region IV, AZ.

Visitor concern over the high profile problem of visibility in parks was cited as factor in the heightening of general public concern over air quality. Mathai maintained that "one point source alone isn't responsible for all the lowered air quality. Electric generators," he said, "are highly visible point sources. But they are furnishing things the public also wants, and *society* must make a decision as to how much it is willing to let rates rise in order to provide cleaner air."

Luckow responded that the Clean Air Act already reflects society's decision that air must be cleaned up. Mathai responded that "the Act also states specifically that costs to point sources must be justified by cost/benefit ratios."

The conference was hosted and organized by the NAU/CPSU and co-sponsored by Bryce Canyon Natural History Assn., the Petrified Forest Museum Assn., and Zion Natural History Assn. Van Riper, the NAU Unit Leader, served as Conference chair; Mark Sogge was conference leader.

A program containing abstracts of presented posters and papers is available from the NAU/CPSU, Flagstaff, AZ 86002; (602) 523-9080

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